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ABSTRACT

A discussion of the field of applied linguistics defines the scope of the discipline, outlines some of the regular publications and activities within it, and looks at four examples of its role in the field of education: language planning, refugee and immigrant issues, dialect issues, and varieties of English. It is emphasized that in these and other areas, applied linguistics is an interdisciplinary endeavor, combining the information and expertise gained from linguistics and from a variety of other fields, as appropriate. (MSE)

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LINGUISTICS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

APPENDIX 4-A

Applied Linguistics: An Overview

by

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The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the LSA or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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PREFACE

The Linguistics in the Undergraduate Curriculum (LUC) project is an effort by the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) to study the state of undergraduate instruction in linguistics in the United States and Canada and to suggest directions for its future development. It was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities during the period 1 January 1985-31 December 1987. The project was carried out under the direction of D. Terence Langendoen, Principal Investigator, and Secretary-Treasurer of the LSA. Mary Niebuhr, Executive Assistant at the LSA office in Washington, DC, was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the project with the assistance of Nicole VandenHeuvel and Dana McDaniel.

Project oversight was provided by a Steering Committee that was appointed by the LSA Executive Committee in 1985. Its members were: Judith Aissen (University of California, Santa Cruz), Paul Angelis (Southern Illinois University), Victoria Fromkin (University of California, Los Angeles), Frank Heny, Robert Jeffers (Rutgers University), D. Terence Langendoen (Graduate Center of the City University of New York), Manjari Ohala (San Jose State University), Ellen Prince (University of Pennsylvania), and Arnold Zwicky (The Ohio State University and Stanford University). The Steering Committee, in turn, received help from a Consultant Panel, whose members were: Ed Battistella (University of Alabama, Birmingham), Byron Bender (University of Hawaii, Manoa), Garland Bills (University of New Mexico), Daniel Brink (Arizona State University), Ronald Butters (Duke University), Charles Cairns (Queens College of CUNY), Jean Casagrande (University of Florida), Nancy Dorian (Bryn Mawr College), Sheila Embleton (York University), Francine Frank (State University of New York, Albany), Robert Freidin (Princeton University), Jean Berko-Gleason (Boston University), Wayne Harbert (Cornell University), Alice Harris (Vanderbilt University), Jeffrey Heath, Michael Henderson (University of Kansas), Larry Hutchinson (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis), Ray Jackendoff (Brandeis University), Robert Johnson (Gallaudet College), Braj Kachru (University of Illinois, Urbana), Charles Kreidler (Georgetown University), William Ladusaw (University of California, Santa Cruz), Ilse Lehiste (The Ohio State University), David Lightfoot (University of Maryland), Donna Jo Napoli (Swarthmore College), Ronald Macaulay (Pitzer College), Geoffrey Pullum (University of California, Santa Cruz), Victor Raskin (Purdue University), Sanford Schane (University of California, San Diego), Carlota Smith (University of Texas, Austin), Roger Shuy (Georgetown University), and Jessica Wirth (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee).

No discussion of trends, developments, or scholarship in applied linguistics can be launched without adequate consideration of what applied linguistics as a term of reference and as a field of inquiry has meant to both scholars and practitioners. This issue, although basic to an understanding of the topic, is far from a straightforward one to address. Linguistics, itself, is a rather young discipline without benefit of a lengthy, established tradition to dictate its scope and focus. Unlike so many other fields among the humanities and the social or physical sciences, linguistics has evolved relatively recently as the science of language. Complicating matters even more is the fact that this evolvement has proceeded along lines which have occasionally appeared divergent, if not even conflicting. On the one hand, there has been a tendency for linguistics and linguists to narrow the investigation of language to issues dealing with the nature of language in a rather restricted sense. Key elements in this progression have been the attempts to refine the ways in which we can explain the many interlocking features and properties of individual languages and of language in its most universal sense. How best, for example, can we understand the systems of sounds employed within human languages? How do these sounds and sound systems interact with the ways in which words are combined within what is generally referred to as grammar? In what ways do these sounds, sound systems, and grammatical features relate to the systems of meanings conveyed by words and groups of words within languages?

While such simplistic terms cannot adequately describe the full extent of such inquiry, it is somewhat different from many other lines of linguistic investigation which have broadened the questions posed about language, its nature, and its use. By establishing clear links with other disciplines, most noticeably psychology and sociology, a range of other questions have been put forward in an effort to expand our understanding of language. How do children acquire their first language? What regional and social varieties exist among languages as actually used in numerous settings and what factors contribute to the maintenance or spread of these varieties? What combination of factors tend to affect the development or evolvement of bilingual or multilingual societies? How does an understanding of the nature of language and the organization of a particular language assist those involved in the planning and process of teaching those languages?

These are only a very few of the kinds of issues explored in an expanded agenda of linguistic investigation. It is such issues and the extension of them to numerous language problems in the real world which have accumulated to provide the foundation for what has become known as applied linguistics. It is obvious that in this brief overview we cannot expect to provide a comprehensive or exhaustive explanation of what is included in the field of applied linguistics. What we have attempted to do, however, is to explore the range of topics which have been affected by linguistics and language study and to summarize the discussions which have taken place among those in the field to clarify the nature and scope of applied linguistics. Among the areas most directly linked to and influenced by linguistics within the United States has been the network of persons, programs, and organizations dealing with the teaching of English as a second or foreign language. Our summary will, therefore, pay particular

attention to the nature and development of this relationship.

Definitions

As difficult as it may be to define linguistics, attempting to provide a definition for applied linguistics has been even more frustrating. This has not prevented key members of the profession, either individually or collectively, from addressing this issue and exploring some guidelines. Much of this activity has been informal, taking the form of discussions at professional conferences, panels and forums, letters appearing in journals or related publications, and even in minutes or proceedings from deliberations at regional, national and international conferences. Some of this introspection has led to more formal statements about the topic, the most notable of which is Robert Kaplan's collection of articles On the Scope of Applied Linguistics (Newbury House, 1980). American, British, Canadian and Australian professionals put forward in their individual contributions their views on both the nature of applied linguistics and the work of applied linguists. One common theme appears in all of the remarks on this subject: applied linguistics is not simply the application of linguistics.

This statement encompasses two key concepts vital to an understanding of the nature of applied linguistics. First, applied linguistics does not mean that the theories and principles of language are taken as is and transferred directly to any "applied" activity. Whether we are speaking of language teaching, speech therapy, translation, lexicography, or any of the many language related issues, problems, and activities which have engaged the attention of professionals in numerous, diverse situations, it is inappropriate and counterproductive to expect that the formal principles and theories of linguistics can be "used" in any direct manner. The inappropriateness stems from the fact that the principles and theories of language as developed by linguists remain exactly that -- attempts to advance our understanding of the nature of language. Such a goal is related to but different from the objectives of work done in fields such as those mentioned above. Moreover, as is the case in any science, the practitioners share the results of their work first and foremost with their colleagues. Linguists, as do physicists, psychologists, or philosophers, shape the existing views of their science in terms relevant to their peers and not expressly with other audiences in mind.

In cases where attempts have been made to draw close and direct links between linguistics and other fields, we have often found examples of counterproductive results. Such was the situation when transformational-generative grammar became the leading approach to language description and linguistic theory in the 1960's and 70/s. In the rush to apply this approach, and particularly its specific representation of English grammar, to the teaching of English both in first and second language situations, textbooks and other materials were written and disseminated replete with transformational rules as their basic orientation. The result was that this emphasis on the linguistic aspect of what was being taught, especially in such a pure form, led to the exclusion of many other clearly relevant and essential aspects of language teaching. Thus, the second concept to be stressed with regard to the nature of our subject becomes apparent.

Applied linguistics does not mean that linguistics, even indirectly, is turned to as the sole discipline to assist in language related issues and activities. It has become increasingly clear that such activities must be dealt with in an interdisciplinary fashion, with linguistics playing but one element in a combined panoply of sources providing guidance, support and information. In positive terms, then, applied linguistics refers to the broad range of activities which deal with language related issues and problems and which bring to bear on these problems insights from linguistics and other relevant disciplines. In very similar terms Peter Strevens has identified applied linguistics as "a multidisciplinary approach to the solution of language based problems." As such, it would be inappropriate to restrict the field only to certain designated areas of investigation. While some areas have long been considered a part of applied linguistics, others have only more recently become included and even more will no doubt be added in the future. Part of the attractiveness of applied linguistics is the open-ended nature of the field. The all-pervasiveness of language is reflected in the variety of directions pursued within applied linguistics and by applied linguists. Some sense of the scope of these directions can be seen in this brief summary.

Scope

Trying to capture the flavor of a field as dynamic as applied linguistics is somewhat analogous to aiming at a moving target. More appropriate, perhaps, would be the image of a multi-faceted target moving in a number of directions simultaneously. As difficult as this may appear, some effort must be made to move beyond the level of definition and to convey, even if only in summary fashion, a sense of the work which has typically engaged the attention of applied linguists. Some sources of such information are the professional journals, books, and monographs in which applied linguists share the results of their research and related work. A number of volumes have appeared providing in anthology form collections of writings on various aspects of the field (see list of resources attached). A journal appearing three times a year entitled Applied Linguistics serves as a forum for reporting the work of applied linguists primarily in Great Britain and the United States. The journal is a joint effort of the British Association of Applied Linguistics (BAAL) formed in 1967 and its American counterpart, the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) established ten years later. Finally, an annual series of books entitled the Annual Review of Applied Linguistics has appeared since 1980, some issues devoted to a single theme, and others including a range of topics. The 1985 issue of this series gives a particularly good indication of the scope of applied linguistics. The volume includes entries on the following topics:

1. Second Language Acquisition and Teaching -- methodology, learning processes, curriculum design, etc.

2. Language and Education -- structure of classroom lessons, teacher-student talk, cultural differences, etc.

3. Language and Computers -- natural language processing, concordance/dictionary making, machine translation, computer assisted

language learning, etc.

4. Language and Law -- courtroom language, language of laws, translation of proceedings, language as evidence, etc.

5. Language and Medicine -- doctor/patient discourse, licensing policies, bilingual services, etc.

6. Language and Science -- scientific discourse, translation, discourse patterns within disciplines, etc.

7. Language and Media -- the nature of news, advertising, cross-cultural differences, etc.

8. Language and Politics -- propoganda, political and ideological discourse, etc.

9. Language and Literacy -- basic literacy, cross-cultural literacy, bilingual/multilingual education, etc.

10. Language and Translation -- interpreting, machine translation, contrastive discourse patterns, etc.

The above areas often overlap and precise boundaries between subject areas can be difficult to delimit. Certainly the list of areas which are of interest can be expanded and undoubtedly new areas of applied linguistic research will emerge in the future. In fact, some believe that since language itself is a basic human activity, applied linguistics can be of value in most domains of human interaction.

Within such a range of activities one area has been consistently prominent. Because of the formal and informal association of appled linguistics with education that area is worthy of particular reference here. Even in this case some selection is necessary, acknowledging from the start that our discussion cannot be comprehensive. With this in mind, we have summarized some of the issues and questions representative of the involvement of language in education within four subcategories. The first deals with the matter of language planning. The second concerns the role of language within the context of refugee and immigrant programs. The third includes issues related to the role of dialects and their impact on educational matters. Finally, with particular reference to English, there is the question of international varieties of that language and the growing role of such phenomena in the world of education. In some cases the focus of our review will be more directly tied to the U.S. context. In others it will be appropriate to broaden the discussion to include issues which are relevant in a much more extended frame of reference. It is our hope at least to raise questions in each area which have already, or are fast becoming, focal points for investigation, research and the dissemination of information.

Language Planning

One area which involves applied linguists on a world-wide basis is the issue of deciding on the language of instruction in school systems. Such a choice is more than an educational matter because success or failure in schooling can have a direct impact on a person's future economic, social and political status. In multilingual countries around the world the choice of the language of instruction involves a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic issues.

From linguistics we can gain information on the number of languages in a given country, how they are structurally related, and the sociolinguistic functions of each language. Specific projects with a linguistic base provide demographic information, including the number of bilinguals, and data on the types of lexical items currently in each language (e.g. technological, scientific words), whether or not the language has been codified in writing and the degree of international usage for each language. In addition, information and expertise on how people learn second languages, what methods can aid in second language acquisition and the best time to introduce additional languages into the curriculum can be provided by those with linguistic training. All this information is vital for decisions on which language or languages are to be employed in the school system.

However, linguistic data are not the only factors in determining language choice in the educational system. Such decisions may also be based on political ideology (e.g. a colonial legacy, a desire to forge a new identitiy, etc.), rivalries among various ethnic economic political groups who will gain or lose power when languages are maintained or switched, and philosophies on the desirability of pluralism in a given society. Economics also enters into the picture for successful instruction requires trained teachers, curriculum specialists, and materials, the cost for which will also influence decision makers.

As a result of all of these factors, some basic questions often appear. Will the selection of one indigenous language heighten national unity or cause feelings of resentment by speakers of other indigenous languages? What is gained or lost through the selection or retention of a colonial language -- a new political identity, economic modernity, access to the wider world ? What are the costs, both economic and non-economic, in preparing new textbooks in an indigenous language and in finding and training teachers to teach in that language? Should additional languages be introduced later in the curriculum and, if so, at what point and in which language? How are speakers of other languages to be treated?

These questions, and a host of others, vary from country to country and there are no universal answers to the issues they raise. Solutions to such questions should involve linguists and depend on information gained from linguistics. However, it is equally important to remember that the decisions which are made are often formed on the basis of non-linguistic concerns. Nonetheless, the applied linguist, working jointly with specialists from other disciplines, can aid in

the decision-making process, helping to determine whether or not existing policies on language instruction should be maintained or changed.

Refugee and Immigrant Issues

There is hardly a continent on earth which has not been beset by problems resulting from the increasing flow of refugees and immigrants. To be sure, the impetus for the movements of peoples under such circumstances has rarely been based on language factors. The result of this trend, however, has had clear implications for language considerations. The United States has for some time been faced with the problem of how schools should cope with significant numbers of children whose native language is not English. In some instances, federal guidelines have been developed to assist with the development of plans for expanding the English proficiency of such students. At various times these plans have incorporated bilingual components designed to foster better education by providing limited instruction in the first language of the students. Ultimately, given the nature of the decentralized educational system of the United States, it has been school districts within the separate states which have been left with the responsibility for implementing any multilingual programs. The ripple effect from such programs has meant that a continuous cycle of activities require the contribution of individuals with training as applied linguists.

One of the first problems has been the assessment of the actual proficiency of refugee and immigrant students in English and in their first languages. With such a wide variety of Asian, European and American languages represented, a great deal of expertise is required on the part of those coordinating these activities. There is a crying need for persons with linguistic training to work with the preparation of textbooks and other materials, in training teachers, in actual teaching (both English and content areas), and in overall coordination of teaching support and evaluation activities.

There is a close link between the activities associated with the teaching of English as a second language and similar activities conducted within bilingual programs. Two professional organizations now over twenty years old serve as focal points for the teaching, research and general professional interests and needs of the two fields. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE) include within their membership many persons who deal with these issues on a daily basis. Applied linguistics has been prominent among the areas of specialization for these individuals. More than half the states in the U.S. now include ESL and/or bilingual education as part of their certification or endorsement areas for teachers. In these cases linguistics and applied linguistics are regularly included in the areas of training for acquiring or maintaining such certification.

Not all of the refugees and immigrants are children, of course. For adults the practical problems to be dealt with, and which usually require consideration of language matters, include employment and daily survival. Organizations such as the Center for Applied

Linguistics in Washington, D.C. have long coordinated projects dealing with the training of refugees in job skills and in becoming prepared to deal with the demands of life in the United States, all with a clear focus on language as a clear element in meeting such an objective. Many community colleges and adult education centers continue to host large numbers of persons requiring training and orientation to English and its use in this society. From pure language issues to those dealing with broader problems arising from the interaction of peoples from a variety of races, languages, and cultures, linguistics has played a key role in tackling these problems.

Dialect Issues

Another area where applied linguists have assumed an active role centers on the pedagogical implications arising from dialect diversity in the United States. Linguists have always been interested in the study of dialectal differences within the English language. With the rise of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960's and the raising of public consciousness toward the political, social, economic and educational inequalities among certain minoritiy groups, especially Black Americans, dialect studies became part of a wider trend of research directed at minorities in the U.S. Such investigations sought to describe the linguistic characteristics of various dialects and to create an understanding that each dialect is logical and systematic, with no dialect being superior to another. Other studies investigated attitudes held toward dialect speakers, incorporating in a unique fashion information from linguistics and other social sciences.

A natural byproduct of these studies was a series of questions related to the pedagogical effect of dialects on learners' progress in the school system, on teachers' attitudes toward dialect users and on whether or not changes should be implemented in instructional practices and teaching materials to deal with a multidialectal school population. Still unresolved today, some of the questions are: should oral dialect use (i.e., non-standard varieties of English) be encouraged, tolerated or eradicated in students? Do speakers of non-standard dialects have special problems when learning to read and write in standard English? Should materials for use in schools be written in non-standard dialects? How can teachers and administrators be sensitized and prepared to deal with the educational needs of speakers of non-standard dialects?

Heated debate has emerged on all of these questions and various attempts have been made to help non-standard speakers in the school systems but, as already mentioned, no universal philosophy or solution has emerged. As with other issues that have been discussed, the issue is not purely a linguistic matter nor is it solely confined to the school situation. Educational solutions to language issues will ultimately be part of wider social, economic and public policy. What has been a positive development is that the evolvement of social issues and educational solutions has been tempered by information and guidance from linguistics.

Varieties of English

Hardly a day goes by without seeing in newspapers or magazines some discussion of the increasing internationalization of science, technology, business, and industry. Usually, this is accompanied by some indictment of the educational system of the United States which does not appear to be preparing scientists, technicians, business representatives, and industrialists who can work competitively in the increasingly international arena because of their lack of linguistic and intercultural training. Over and above such issues as they impact on Americans, there is a corollary set of issues which stems from the evolvement of a number of linguistic, cultural, social, economic and religious factors in many countries world-wide. One aspect of this evolvement is the changing nature of English. Because of the extensive need for English in the fields mentioned, it is growing in terms of the number of its speakers around the world. Estimates place the number of persons who speak English as a second language at 700 million, even more than the 400 million native speakers. The degree and level of usage among these second language speakers varies extensively, however, depending and changing often due to developments on the local (national) scene. In many countries where English had been a language, if not the language, of instruction in the schools, it has now been replaced by other national or indigenous languages. Over time this has meant that younger persons are leaving school with less developed skills in English than was the case before. Moreover, despite internationalization, thousands of persons within school systems and beyond are becoming able to use English in only very restricted settings.

So extensive has been this pattern of development that now formalized varieties of English have become stabilized and in fact recognized as valid for many purposes. For the student in Malaysia, Sri-Lanka, or Indonesia who needs to use English on a regular basis but who rarely interacts with anyone but other nationals from his own country, there is little incentive or argument to aim for British or American standards in all phases and features of the language. As this situation has become so widespread, there is need to apply the information and expertise of applied linguists to determining as accurately as possible the changing nature of English and its role vis-a-vis other languages in numerous countries. Some of this work demands data collection but often situations require analysis and informed guidance s input to teams of specialists from several disciplines.

An outgrowth of these developments has been the eventual impact on higher education in the United States. For some years there have been a large number of foreign students enrolled in American colleges and universities. The majority of these students do not speak English as their first language. In addition to those who come prepared with sufficient English skills to begin their studies, there are many who must devote some time to English training in order to reach that level. Thus, we have the hundreds of English language

institutes and programs with teaching, administrative, research and support staffs developed precisely for this purpose. In many instances, especially in the many situations where these programs are linked with or even housed in linguistics departments, there is a clear role and need for applied linguistics. The demands of the current situation have become only more complex given the world-wide developments described above. Most non-native speakers arriving for English training in the U.S. these days have had some formal and informal exposure to English in their home countries. Because of the complicated patterns of language use in so many countries, the persons in question often exhibit a disparate combination of skills in English. In some cases reading abilities are quite high but oral skills are not. In other cases whatever English skills such persons possess are restricted to very specialized contexts. Such situations demand increasingly sophisticated approaches to language assessment, needs analysis, and actual teaching with all that that entails.

Perhaps the most recently developing situation within higher education is one which has gained the attention of faculty members, students, administrators, parents and legislators throughout the United States. This is the matter of the linguistic abilities of foreign teaching assistants. Especially in certain fields such as Mathematics, Engineering, Physics, and Chemistry, the number of graduate students who are native speakers of English has dwindled significantly. At the same time, as the number of undergraduate students and classes has grown, more and more departments, especially at large state universities have turned to their foreign graduate students to assist by serving as teaching assistants. What seemed such a logical solution to a developing situation has led to some problems of tremendous proportions, at least judging from the amount of publicity regularly appearing. The crux of the issue is the inability of such assistants to use English to the degree required for their teaching assignments.

An undeniable aspect of this problem is the lack of exposure of most American undergraduates to speakers of other languages. But given the evolving situation of English throughout the world, much can also be attributed to the convergence of speakers of a variety of Englishes. What is called for are careful assessment procedures, informed analyses, and accurate combinations of linguistic, demographic, and sociological data, all converging to address a clear problem.

Summary

Thus, in very passing fashion we have looked at four examples of how and why applied linguistics plays a role in the field of education. In these and other related examples from other fields, applied linguistics continues to be an interdisciplinary endeavor, combining the information and expertise gained from linguistics and from a variety of other fields as appropriate. Preparation leading to work in applied linguistics usually requires advanced training at the graduate level. However, undergraduate courses and programs of study focusing on or including linguistics serves as a useful beginning to such work as well.

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